

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-45 are currently pending in the application. In the Office Action of January 2, 2004, Claims 1 and 20-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,020,487, to Winter, in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,459,427, to Chambers et al. Claims 2 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Winter in view of Chambers et al. and further in view U.S. Patent No. 4,514,476, to Fitzgerald. Claims 4, 15, and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Winter in view of Chambers et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,011,389, to Masreliez et al. Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Winter in view of Chambers et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,508,122, to McCall et al. Claims 9-13, 16-18, 27-30, and 33-35 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 19 and 36-45 were allowed.

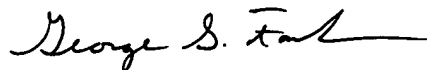
In response to the Examiner's indication that Claims 9-13, 16-18, 27-30, and 33-35 would be allowable if amended as indicated above, regarding Claims 16-18, applicant has amended the claims as suggested by the Examiner so as to attempt to place the application in condition for allowance. Regarding Claims 9-13, applicant has instead amended the claims to depend from allowed Claim 19, so as to attempt to place the application in condition for allowance. Regarding Claims 27-30 and 33-35, applicant has instead canceled Claims 27 and 29 and amended Claims 28, 30, and 33-35 to depend from allowed Claim 36, so as to attempt to place the application in condition for allowance. Rejected Claims 1, 4, 8, 15, 20, and 32 have been canceled. Rejected Claim 2 has been amended to depend from allowed Claim 19 and rejected Claim 5 has been amended to depend from amended Claim 2, so as to attempt to place the

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application in condition for allowance. Rejected Claims 21 and 22 have been amended to depend from allowed Claim 36, so as to attempt to place the application in condition for allowance. Rejected Claim 26 depends from amended Claim 22, which now depends from allowed Claim 36, so as to attempt to place the application in condition for allowance. In general, applicant respectfully disagrees with the characterization of the prior art in relation to the invention and believes that the rejected claimed features of the present invention are patentably distinct over the teachings of the prior art, however, in order to further prosecution of the present application and to expedite issuance of the selected claims, applicant has requested permission to amend the claims as indicated above. Furthermore, since the present response is being submitted at the 6-month date from the mailing of the Final Office Action, applicant is concurrently submitting a Notice of Appeal so as to keep the application pending while the Examiner is given time to review the response which applicant hopes will place the application in condition for allowance. Therefore, applicant respectfully requests that the amendment be entered and that the Claims 2, ~~4~~, 5, 9-13, 16-19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 30 and 33-45 be allowed and that the case be passed to issue. Should any further questions remain, the Examiner is invited to contact applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service in a sealed envelope as first class mail with postage thereon fully prepaid and addressed to Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the below date.

Date:

GSF:gm

July 2, 2004

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